

REMARKS

Claims 1-3, 5-11, 15, 19, 20 and 22-26 are now present in the application. Claims 1, 7, 19, and 20 have been amended, and claim 5 and 27 have been canceled. Claims 1, 19 and 20 are independent. Reconsideration of this application, as amended, is respectfully requested.

Objection to the Drawings

The drawings stand objected to under 37 C.F.R. § 1.83(a) since not illustrating every feature of the invention specified in the claims. Specifically, the Examiner asserts that claims 5, 20, 23 and 26 are not illustrated in the drawings.

As the Examiner will note, eight (8) replacement sheets of drawings are attached to the present Amendment for the Examiner's consideration. The eight (8) sheets of drawings replace the seven (7) sheets of drawings originally filed in the present application. The eight (8) sheets of drawings include the amendments presented in the Letters to the Official Draftsperson dated October 24, 2001 and May 8, 2001, which have been approved by the Examiner. In addition, the eight (8) sheets of drawings include an additional correction to Figure 15 to remove the underlining from the reference numeral 6 and the eight (8) sheets of drawings do not have page numbers thereon in order to address the Examiner's objection with regard to improper numbering of the pages due to the addition of Figures 15 and 16.

With regard to claim 5, as the Examiner will note, this claim has been cancelled and its limitations placed into claim 1, with the exception of the limitation of "an entire surface of said

absorbent sheet is overlaid with said top layer.” Accordingly, the Examiner’s objection of the drawings due to claim 5 has been rendered moot.

With regard to independent claim 20, as the Examiner will note, this claim has been amended to delete the recitation “planar” therefrom. Accordingly, the Examiner’s objection of the drawings due to claim 20 has been rendered moot.

With regard to claims 22 and 23, it is believed that the drawings have been objected to in view of these claims only because of the fact that these claims depend from objected to claim 20. Since claim 20 has been amended in the above manner, the Examiner’s objection of the drawings due to claim 22 and 23 has also been rendered moot.

In view of the above amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully submit that the drawings illustrate every feature of the invention specified in the claims. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the drawing objection under 37 C.F.R. § 1.83(a) are respectfully requested.

Objection to the Disclosure

The disclosure stands objected to for several minor informalities. First, the Examiner asserts that the disclosure does not comply with 35 U.S.C. § 112, first paragraph. As the Examiner will note, page 24, line 7 has been amended to change “are” to –is-- as suggested by the Examiner. Accordingly, the Examiner’s objection under 35 U.S.C. § 112, first paragraph has been overcome.

With regard to the Summary of the Invention section, the Examiner asserts that the description of the claimed invention is not commensurate in scope with the claimed invention. As the Examiner will note, the Summary of the Invention section has been amended to better reflect the scope of amended claim 1.

It is also noted that page 23, line 22 have been amended to change “31” to –31’—as suggested by the Examiner.

In view of the above amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully submit that the disclosure is in proper form. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the above objections are respectfully requested.

Claim Objections

Claim 7 stands objected to for a minor informality. As the Examiner will note, claim 7 has been amended in the manner suggested by the Examiner. Accordingly, this claim objection has been obviated. Reconsideration and withdrawal of this objection are respectfully requested.

Claim 27 also stands objected to under 37 C.F.R. § 1.75 as being a substantial duplicate of claim 24. As the Examiner will note, claim 27 has been canceled, thereby rendering the Examiner’s objection moot.

Rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph

Claims 1-3, 5-11, 15 and 19-27 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which Applicants regard as the invention. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

At the outset, it is pointed out that claims 5 and 27 have been canceled, thereby rendering the Examiner's rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph moot with regard to these claims.

With regard to claim 1, this claim has been amended in the manner suggested by the Examiner.

With regard to claims 19 and 20, these claims have been amended to clarify the absorbent member includes the absorbent sheet and the single pad, respectively. Claim 20 has also been amended to delete the recitation "planar."

In view of the above amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully submit that claims 1-3, 5-11, 15, 19, 20 and 21-26 are definite and clear. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph are respectfully requested.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. §§ 102 and 103

Claims 1-3, 8-11, 15 and 24 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Roessler et al., U.S. Patent No. 5,405,342. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

As the Examiner will note, claim 1 has been amended to include certain limitations from claim 5, which has been canceled. The Examiner indicated that claim 5 included allowable subject matter. Accordingly, claim 1 should now be in condition for allowance.

With regard to dependent claims 2, 3, 8-11, 15 and 24, Applicants submit that these claims are allowable due to their dependence on independent claim 1, as well as due to the additional recitations in these claims.

In view of the above amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully submit that claims 1-3, 8-11, 15 and 24 clearly define the present invention over the Roessler et al. reference relied by the Examiner. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102 are respectfully requested.

Allowable Subject Matter

Claims 5-7, 21, 27, 19, 20, 22, 23, 25 and 26 have been indicated by the Examiner as including allowable subject matter. Applicants greatly appreciate the indication of the allowable subject matter by the Examiner. Since claim 1 has been amended to include the subject matter of claim 5, it is believed that all of the claims in the present application are in condition for allowance. Accordingly, favorable consideration and allowance of the present application are respectfully requested.

CONCLUSION

All the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed and/or rendered moot. Applicants therefore respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider all presently pending rejections and that they be withdrawn.

It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the Office Action, and that as such, the Examiner is respectfully requested to send the application to Issue.

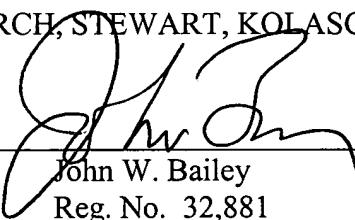
In the event there are any matters remaining in this application, the Examiner is invited to contact Paul C. Lewis, Registration No. 43,368 at (703) 205-8000 in the Washington, D.C. area.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§1.16 or 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

BIRCH, STEWART, KOLASCH & BIRCH, LLP

By



John W. Bailey
Reg. No. 32,881

JWB/PCL

P. O. Box 747
Falls Church, VA 22040-0747
(703) 205-8000